

APPENDIX.

LIFE OF THE VEN. MARY OF
JESUS OF AGREDA.

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APPENDIX.

LIFE OF MARY OF JESUS.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE LIFE OF THE VENERABLE MARY OF
JESUS OF AGREDA.



THE life of the servant of God, Mary of Jesus, offers the most perfect model of a soul rising from virtue to virtue, according to the words of the prophet, even to the summit of perfection; and her character demands from us an attentive study and meditation. There is much to learn in these pages for whomsoever desires to follow the path of holiness without looking back. They offer a unique example of the spiritual life in its perfection.

It may, perhaps, be objected that only a small number of privileged souls receive such great favors, or are called by the way of ecstasies, visions, and the most eminent gifts of infused science. However this may be, it remains not the less incontestable that a great many are called to perfection and to contemplation, if not infused, at least acquired; and that both lead to the highest perfection, as it is expressly taught by the great mystical doctor, St. Teresa, in her "*Treatise on Perfection*," Chapter XVIII. Another of her admirable works, "*The Interior Castle*," cannot be too highly recommended to the reader. As for those who are incredulous in regard to the divine communications and celestial favors which are mentioned in this *Life*, let them remember that the Church does not reject them:—she examines them with care, but she is not incredulous. Without doubt to believe on slight grounds

is folly—*qui cito credit, levis est corde*. Eccl. xix. 4. Nevertheless, it would be temerity to refuse credence to facts which the most learned and pious men do not hesitate to pronounce worthy of all confidence. God, in the impenetrable designs of His mercy, has permitted us to be a witness of prodigies that yield in nothing to any of the wonders recorded in the life of Mary of Jesus. For ourselves, we profess openly that nothing has been more useful to our soul than our belief in the miracles of God in His saints.

It seems evident to us that we have reached the times which the venerable Grignon de Montfort speaks of in his "*Treatise on the True Devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin*." "At the end of the world, and very soon, the Most High, with His Holy Mother, will form for themselves great saints, who will as much surpass the greater number of other saints as the cedars of Lebanon surpass little trees—as it has been revealed to a holy soul, and as we read in the writings of St. Vincent Ferrier, p. 29."

Thus three saints affirm that in the present age, which is the age of Mary, the Holy Spirit will pour out upon souls the gifts of wisdom for the operations of miracles of grace. These souls, in imitation of Mary of Jesus d'Agreda, will become living copies of Mary, and will lose themselves in the abyss of her interior, to love and glorify Jesus Christ. Mary of Jesus is the great model to follow, and the doctrine of her writings is the way and the truth which lead infallibly to Jesus Christ. The works of this servant of God are destined to be the book of life for the great souls of whom we speak.

To observe the decree of the Sovereign Pontiff, Urban VIII., of happy memory, of the 5th of July, 1634, we protest that all the visions, revelations, miracles, and other extraordinary favors recorded in the "*Life of Mary of Jesus*," have no other authority than that given by the testimonials reported by us.

LIFE OF THE VENERABLE
MARY OF JESUS, OF AGREDA.

CHAPTER I.

HER BIRTH.—THE FIRST SPIRITUAL LIGHTS WHICH GOD COMMUNICATES TO HER.—INSTRUCTIONS SHE RECEIVES FROM HER PARENTS.—HER CONDUCT, TO THE AGE OF TWELVE YEARS.

THE venerable Mother, Mary of Jesus, who wrote the *Cité Mystique de Dieu*, (The Mystical City of God,) was born at Agreda, a city of old Castile in Spain, on the 2d of April, 1602. Her parents were Francis Coronel and Catharine d'Arana, both noble, and of great virtue.

She was baptized on the eleventh of the same month, and by a special disposition of Providence, she was named Mary, to which she afterwards added that of Jesus, which was the name given by the early Christians to the Mother of

the Saviour, whom they called MARY OF JESUS. Her Mother, convinced that her daughter was destined by God for great things, guarded her with watchful care.

II. Before the little Mary was capable of profiting by the lessons of her parents, God began to instruct her in a wonderful way. With the earliest use of her reason she had an exalted vision, in which her understanding was enlightened by divine illuminations, and her will confirmed. This supernatural vision was the beginning of knowledge to the child; from it she learned to know God as the creator of the universe, the preserver and vivifier of all that has existence. Human miseries were made manifest to her in herself; and the consciousness she attained of them, humbled her to the very depths of her nothingness. Human nature in its first state of innocence was revealed to her, and she discovered the ravages that sin had made in man. She was attracted by the goodness and the infinite beauty of God, and absorbed in His love, and she conceived a very great fear of offending God and of losing His grace. Thus the spiritual edifice of this soul was established on the solid foundations of love, humility and fear.

From this time, having the perfect use of her

reason, which was aided by the light and knowledge acquired in the vision, she began to exercise her powers of reflection. The Lord communicated to her, also, an infused knowledge of the articles of the faith which she should believe; of the commandments of the law of grace, and those of the holy Church which she should observe; of the nature and the qualities of the persons with whom she should associate, and of her conduct towards them.

Favored with such admirable lights, she resolved to employ all her faculties to love God and keep His commandments; and she lived in great serenity of mind and tranquillity of conscience, not allowing herself to be scandalized by the conduct of others, and acting in all things with the simplicity of the dove.

But God, having resolved to raise the edifice of the spiritual life of this child to a sublime elevation, willed to consolidate it by the sure counterpoise of afflictions. He suspended, therefore, His caresses, and the effects of His presence. This affliction was very great. She sought her beloved, but was not able to find Him, and, penetrated by grief, she wept and lamented. This absence of the Lord continued during several years, for she received no other extraordinary favors, until some days after taking the religious habit.

Meanwhile the Lord gave her only that interior illumination which is usually enjoyed by souls who follow the way of perfection.

The sorrowing child feared to have offended the Lord, and that His absence was intended as a chastisement. The humble sentiments she entertained for herself led her to regard all with whom she associated as her superiors, and this humility, being deeply grounded in her heart, made her timid in their presence. She found neither repose nor consolation but in retreat. Worldly conversation, although it is permitted, rendered her melancholy, and, under these appearances, she came to be considered a useless creature.

Her parents were pained to observe these timid and sombre dispositions in their daughter. Her mother suspected them to be the effects of an idle or slothful nature, and, under this impression, she treated her with severity, and reproved her with harshness. The father followed the example of his wife. This was designed by Providence, in order to preserve the humility of the child. In these afflictions she sought after God. "My divine Master and adorable Lord," she cried, "my father and my mother have forsaken me! O cast a favorable look upon Thy helpless child!" But all the gates of consolation were shut, and her heart was in bitterness.

The Lord accompanied these spiritual pains by others of her body, which gave a timely mortification to the flesh, so that it should not resist the spirit; and she was exercised by almost continual disorders or maladies. These indispositions began from her sixteenth year, for her intense sufferings disturbed her health. With great submission to the Divine will, she made a wise use of her afflictions to deepen her humility, and of her maladies to exercise her patience. She was much encouraged by the remembrance of the passion of our Saviour, which she often called to mind: and when the Lord said to her, "*I have suffered far more for thee,*" she forgot all her pains.

III.—Her parents did not neglect to imbue her mind with the principles of Christian doctrine. Her pious mother undertook to instruct her, and was agreeably surprised to find that this child, so useless in worldly matters, was so capable to learn and so inclined to devotion. From this, she inferred that in her little Mary some divine secret lay concealed. She took her to the churches, taught her how to frequent the sacraments, and to practise mental prayer.

The Lord enlightened the youthful Mary more and more, by that interior knowledge of which we have spoken. In relating the effects

which she experienced from it, she says: "It consoled me in my afflictions—corrected me in my disorders—checked me in my imperfections, and animated me in my tepidity." She usually received, with this enlightenment, two divine favors: one was an interior voice, which said to her heart: "Come to me, my spouse. Leave terrestrial things. Purify yourself. Direct your actions to please me, for *I am that I am*. Hasten, my dove, to fulfill the desires that I awaken within you." The other was an interior reprehension of her defects and vices; for, if she received any satisfaction with complaisance, the Lord shed so much bitterness within her soul that she became dissolved in tears.

IV. By favor of this spiritual intelligence, she desired, passionately, to practise the virtues. She exercised herself chiefly in the theological virtues of faith, hope, and, especially, in charity; for her will was captivated by the love of God. She neglected no occasion—not even the least—to practise the moral virtues, and she always cherished the highest esteem for virginal purity. Even in her eighth year, the pious child had a strong inspiration that it would be an agreeable offering to the Son of the Virgin to consecrate to Him her virginity, and, taking the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and some

other saints for witnesses, she made a vow of perpetual chastity. From this time the divine spouse increased his favors, although he continued, apparently, absent. In this state she remained until the twelfth year of her age.

She had addressed herself to her confessor, to learn how she could better serve God. He was a spiritual and interior man, who, perceiving the fervor of the child, taught her how to practise mental prayer. God, as if He had awaited the instructions of man, revealed Himself to this loving soul. He placed her in the oraison of quietude, and she felt, with a most sweet tranquillity, the presence of God. The Lord elevated her to such a state that she herself said: "*I lived without living, because Thou, Lord, livedst in me.*" She remained some years in this state, with considerable progress in the divine life.

The Lord had inspired her to preserve the secrets of her interior, but it was not possible that those who associated with her should not perceive something of what she concealed. They observed her equanimity of spirit in afflictions, her joy in contempt. "It is all I ask," said she one day to her mistress, "that they should despise me." They remarked, also, that, from her earliest years, she had deprived herself of a part of her food, for the poor. Her mother

took her with her to visit the poor, and she manifested great joy when she was allowed to dispense the alms.

The report of her virtues spread through the city. In the general esteem excited by her uncommon merit, some persons had the curiosity to watch her in her retreat, where they saw her in the practise of penances almost impossible at her age. They witnessed her great modesty—her extraordinary recollection—the devotion with which she approached the sacraments—and were edified. Her Confessor, notwithstanding his prudence, could not always preserve silence, and sometimes communicated his thoughts to devout persons, and thus she reached the twelfth year of her age.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE OF HER PARENTS IS CHANGED INTO A MONASTERY.—HER CONFLICTS.—SENSIBLE FAVORS WHICH SHE RECEIVED.—ASSAULTS OF THE DEMON.—TRIALS CAUSED BY THE RELIGIEUSES OF THE COMMUNITY.

AFTER having completed her twelfth year, which is the age required for permission to enter in religion, she declared anew to her parents, her vocation. They, doubting nothing, resolved to satisfy her desires, and wished her to take the habit of the bare-footed Carmelites, when, oh, impenetrable secrets of Divine Providence! there happened as follows:—

The pious Mother of the young Mary employed three or four hours, daily, in oraison. One day, the Lord spoke with her, and said, "That it was His will she should build in her house a monastery for nuns, where she and her daughters should make their profession, and that her husband should become a religious of the Order of St. Francis, where his two sons already were." The Lord spoke in the same

manner to her confessor, the venerable F. John de Torrecille, and the obedient lady going to the Convent to communicate to him what had passed, the servant of God came to meet her, saying: 'My daughter, I know already the object of this visit.'

All difficulties and opposition, being at length overcome, the Ordinary and the regular Superiors consented to the foundation. When the fervent Mary heard of this remarkable disposition of the Lord, with regard to her parents, her joy was immense. She encouraged her Mother, and incited her to perseverance. The foundation was retarded during three years, and she ceased not to pray the Lord to shorten the time. Finally, on the 16th of August, 1618, the new monastery was commenced, and on the day of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, the first Mass was solemnly chanted in the new Church. The Monastery was placed under the Order of St. Clara, and the foundresses required that the sisterhood belonging to it, should be bare-footed, although the Order of the Conception of this province wore shoes.

On the 13th of January, 1619, the mother and her two daughters, with three sisters, who had come from the Convent of St. Louis of Burgos, to be foundresses, entered the humble

monastery in perpetual enclosure, and formed there a community. Our Mary, on taking the habit, assumed the title of Mary of Jesus. She was at that time sixteen years of age.

While the parental mansion was being converted into a monastery, the embarrassments of the workmen, and the crowds of people who came about it, had somewhat disturbed her mind. This was permitted by Divine Providence, that her soul might be better established in humility, from the experience of her own weakness. By the help of His grace she repaired these distractions in a little time, yet she did not cease to weep for them as bitterly as if they had been the greatest sins. And, now she began to act as if she had but just commenced life. She reflected how worthy God is to be loved and served, and she represented to herself the sublimity of interior actions. She pondered seriously upon her own fragility, and the great dangers to be encountered in spiritual life. She therefore resolved to follow faithfully the path of virtue, with courageous, humble, and submissive firmness.

II. Although under the pressure of an inextinguishable fear, which is the offspring of love and humility, she persevered throughout her life in this resolution. This fear, which the high-

est illumination could not dissipate, would have proved a hindrance to the flight of her spirit towards God, if the Lord had not tempered it by an absolute confidence in the virtue of obedience according to the words, "*He who hears you, hears me; he who obeys you, obeys me.*" In order to preserve herself with assurance, in obedience to her superiors and confessors, she yielded to the inspiration to show them clearly all her interior—not only that of her sins and imperfections, but also of the least temptations.

The foundations upon which the spiritual edifice of this creature were elevated, were then, love, humility, fear and obedience. She made a general confession not only to ease her conscience, but that her confessor might guide her with security. She applied herself entirely to the holy exercise of oraison in a manner so admirable, and so useful, that she never made it without striving to discover her faults, in order to correct them at once. She commenced by meditation, considering the truths and mysteries which faith inculcates, purifying and ornamenting her soul by their lights, so that she might become the worthy tabernacle of the Lord.

The rule which she followed was to put herself in the lowest place, and to persevere in it until the Lord should elevate her to a higher

degree. The divine spouse, to whom fidelity and true humility are so agreeable, delayed not her entrance into the prayer of recollection, where she annihilated herself, forgot the earth, and, as if in a glowing furnace, was purified. From this He raised her to a higher eminence, in which the fire of divine love began to burn with great spiritual sweetness. All this happened in the first months of her noviciate.

The most frequent subject of her oraison, during this time, was the passion of our Lord Jesus. She bore, always, the image of Jesus Christ crucified, vividly engraved on her heart, and she was sensible of its wondrous effect for the preservation of her interior purity. This holy exercise produced the most salutary effect upon her soul, and brought forth rich fruits.

She divided her time according to her obligations. The remaining hours were employed in reading spiritual books, in mental or vocal prayers, and other exercises of devotion and penitence. Not a moment was wasted. She slept only enough to support life. Without ceasing, she had on her lips these words of David: "*What shall I render to the Lord for all the good He hath done unto me?*". Often her confessor refused to permit the penances which she wished to practise, and she submitted in obe-

dience, believing, always, that the opinion of her confessor was just.

Mary of Jesus passed, in this manner, the years of her noviciate, with great spiritual progress. On the 2d of February, 1620, the day of the Purification of our Lady, she made her profession with her pious mother. Her sister was still too young. Having entered into her religious vows, she continued her spiritual life with renewed fervor. After many entreaties, she obtained the most retired chamber of the convent, and it became the field of her spiritual combats.

III. The Lord, having chosen to make her the historiographer and the disciple of His Most Blessed Mother, elevated her spirit, from degree to degree. But the harbinger of all grace was affliction. This was the only door by which she entered into divine favor. Before receiving the extraordinary graces which Divine Providence destined for her, the demon had permission to afflict her, outwardly, in a surprising manner. The infernal dragon left no means untried. When the servant of God offered up devotions, in the silence of the night, the demon extinguished the light, and sought to disturb her by frightful imaginings. He appeared to her under various forms of horrible animals. Sometimes

he presented himself in that of a foetid corpse; at others, as a living man. He maltreated her in her person, and tormented her in every way to interrupt her exercises. But God imparted to her such courage, that she despised all these attacks, and entirely disregarded the enemy.

The Lord favored her, during these combats, with sensible caresses. When she received Holy Communion, in partaking of the holy elements, she enjoyed a taste of inconceivable savor. Many times she saw the Blessed Sacrament surrounded by a miraculous splendor. These favors were succeeded by varied divine apparitions. The Queen of angels appeared to her, the first time, with her adorable Son in her arms, invested with splendor and glory. She sank prostrate at His feet, with profound humility; but the merciful mother raised her up, and the most sweet Jesus received her within His arms. This apparition gave her strength to support every pain. The august Queen of Heaven was the object of her first vision.

The Lord continued to distinguish His servant by these favors. On the festival of Pentecost, a beautiful dove, all radiant, appeared to her, and rapt her, as if in ecstasy. On another occasion, our Redeemer appeared in the deplorable condition to which He was brought at His

passion. But the combats of the demon succeeded to these sensible favors, and, finally, the Lord gave more ample permission to the enemy.

The demon, perceiving that he was despised by our humble maiden, attacked her, by the permission of the Lord, with greater cruelty. He augmented her maladies, and added extraordinary torments. She was thrown into a state of such extreme debility, that she seemed, constantly, as if in a dying condition. At the same time, he vexed her by horrible fancies, and every species of tribulation. And, as he had discovered that the torment of this soul was the dread of offending God, he attacked her at this point, exciting her fears by insinuations that she was in the road to perdition. He tortured her in other ways, which the following words of the saint will explain. "He tormented me," said she, "with pains which cannot be mentioned, singularly strange for a soul who had throughout life cherished purity.

IV. The fury of the demon was not satiated. He undertook now to afflict her by means of creatures. The convent was so contracted in its dimensions, that her exercises could not be concealed from the other nuns. Some observed her with admiration, others from curiosity. The mother foundresses, seeing the servant of God

continually ill, though she did not keep her bed, resolved to suspend her practices. The demon induced them, under the pretext of compassion, to do as we shall relate.

In order to interrupt her holy exercises, they obliged her to remain in their presence, and even caused her to be watched at night. They forbade her to communicate to her confessor what was passing within her, and she was allowed only half a quarter of an hour for confession. She was punished by being deprived of Holy Communion, and with harsh words. If, being reproved, she did not justify herself, they were displeased; and if she said any thing in the hope of satisfying them, they imposed mortifications. And, besides, the Lord hid His presence from her! Thus circumstanced, she was destitute of all consolations, for prayer, confession, and communion were allowed her only under restrictions. The demon took advantage of all this to destroy her. But this opposition, and these pains, could not check the servant of God in the way of perfection. In her temptation she had recourse to purity of intention. With regard to the sisters, she accepted their censures without excusing herself, and prayed for them. She was always admirable in her obedience to her superiors, and forming,

from their opposition, a means of obtaining merits for herself, she prayed in spirit while striving to satisfy them. Thus she pursued the path of her spiritual life in treading under foot the snares of hell.

CHAPTER III.

SHE RECEIVES SIGNAL GRACES.—HER SUPERIORS SCRUTINIZE HER ECSTASIES.—HER PUNCTUALITY IN THE COMMUNITY LIFE.—HER GREAT AUSTERITIES, AND THE RULES SHE FOLLOWED IN THEM.

IN this abridgment of her life, we cannot enter into the particulars of the various grades of her sufferings, nor of the degrees of prayer which the Lord communicated to her. The servant of God wrote on this subject a treatise, entitled *The Ladder*, in which she records the counsels of the Lord to avoid dangers, the steps by which she ascended to perfection, and the instructions she received from the Holy Ghost.

At the beginning of her religious life, she was able to conceal the favors she received, but, having been elevated to a higher contemplation, it was no longer possible either to hide them, or withdraw herself. On discovering them, some of the religieuses pronounced it hypocrisy. Others said she had lost her senses. The servant of

God consoled herself by the reflection that this would draw contempt upon her. She would gladly have concealed these favors, but the impetuosities of the spirit continued, and became manifest ecstasies.

The Lord designed to enter into intimate communication with this soul, by the way of intellectual revelations and visions, and for this reason he favored her with the ecstasies which ordinarily introduce these visions. On the Saturday after the Feast of Pentecost, in 1620, she inquired of the Lord, in her oraison, "What shall I do?" and a transport of love for God ensued, in which she found herself in a state of perfect interior recollection. In this state, she saw in a vision the Mother of God, with her most holy Son in her arms. The Blessed Virgin gave her an instruction on the virtues, and it seemed to her that the divine Lord drew her heart from her, and changed it. This was her first ecstasy.

From this time, when she was in her eighteenth year, her ecstatic raptures were so frequent that she could no longer conceal them. After receiving Holy Communion, the Lord so transported her in an ecstasy, that, in spite of her efforts, which caused the blood to flow from her mouth, she was unable to resist it. Notwithstanding her esteem for these divine favors, and

her appreciation of the good effects which they wrought in her soul, her humility suffered, because they were known to others. "We ought not to desire these transcendent graces," said she. "I do not wish for them; but I must go whither His Majesty is pleased to conduct me. May His holy will be done in me."

II.—It is not surprising that different sentiments existed in the community with regard to events so extraordinary. The religieuses omitted nothing to enlighten themselves, and went even further than the rules of prudence would approve. They were persuaded there was a supernatural cause at work, and requested the Father Provincial to examine the case. The ecstasies assumed this form: The body was deprived of the use of the senses, as if it had been dead, or inanimate. It was a little raised above the earth, and so light, that, by a single breath, it was moved as easily as a feather. The face appeared more beautiful than usual, and the posture was so modest and devout, that she resembled a seraph in human form. She remained in this state two and even three hours.

The Provincial, who was a very learned man, and, at the same time, devout and prudent, carefully examined the case, and also the circumstances attending it. He probed the interior of

the servant of God—examining her principles, her progress, and her actual condition, together with all the secrets of her soul—and he found all according to the spirit of God. He resolved to put her to the proof by a trial, the effect of which is an assured mark of a good spirit, although the failure of it ought not to be too much censured. He ordered her to come to the parlor, while she was in an ecstasy, and she obeyed immediately. The abbess made the same experiment, with a similar result, and also her confessor, and the mistress of novices.

After so exact a scrutiny, the Provincial decided that it was not judicious to stifle the spirit of the servant of God. He recommended precautions, so that these wonders should not be exposed before seculars; and he provided for her a pious and prudent confessor, to whom he confided the peculiarities of her condition, her recollection, her exercises, and her austerities. The servant of God was much consoled by this examination, because she regarded the judgment of her superiors as the surest guide for her conduct.

Mary of Jesus pursued her spiritual course. The religieuses conceived a great esteem for her extraordinary virtue, and this esteem changed into a sort of veneration, as the ecstasies became

more frequent and more marvellous. All regarded her as a prodigy of holiness, but the exposure caused her humility to suffer an inexorable martyrdom.

In proportion as the Lord multiplied His favors afflictions and pains responded to them. Those caused by the demon were so cruel, that they surpassed her natural strength. The all-powerful Lord fortified her even in these ecstasies. "The soul," she one day said to her confessor, "receives sometimes favors of such a character, that the body is supernaturally refreshed and strengthened; without this I should be dead." The absences of the Lord succeeded these visits: the demon ceased not to whisper that she followed the way to perdition, and, in her humility, she fancied it was true. Here was the sting of the angel of Satan which afflicted this soul,—the fear that the grandeur of the revelations might stimulate her pride.

III. After the departure of the Provincial, she regulated her life with her confessor, so as not to be hindered in following the common life. She was always so exact in the rules of the community, that she was regarded as a model by the other religieuses. Obedience only could hinder her, and she was mortified to fail in the prescribed regularity. Even when there were only

the prayers of the divine office to be said, she availed herself of them.

Having become paralyzed, she caused herself to be transported to the choir, and there ardently besought the Lord not to remove her sickness and sufferings, but so to moderate them that she might not be prevented from being with the community. She received this benefit by means of the blessed Mother of God, and became more fervently attached to her service. She was cured through a holy image of our Lady of Martyrs, which was brought into her cell.

The pains by which the demon tormented her did not cease, but the Lord so regulated the time of her paroxysms that she could perform her common obligations. She was very exact to observe the rules, the constitution, and all the holy practices of religious life, never omitting any thing.

IV. In her personal penances she followed inviolably the rules which her Divine Spouse had given her. "That which the Lord has ordered and instructed me to do," said she to her confessor, "is, to put far from me, in all my exercises and penances, whatever might interfere with the purest intention of pleasing Him alone: all imprudence, which is dangerous in these

matters; all occasions that might attract esteem towards me; all that fervor which arises from self-love, or is not clearly examined by the interior light; not to commend myself in making them, since all that we can do for God, is as nothing in proportion to what we ought to do, and to do nothing but in obedience."

She slept only two hours daily, on a sort of bed made in the form of a grate; sometimes on the pavement, or on the floor. She arose towards eleven o'clock in the night, and began the exercise of the cross, which lasted three hours. She occupied an hour and a half in meditating the passion of the Lord. For half an hour she carried a heavy cross of iron while contemplating the foot-steps of the Saviour. She continued half an hour prostrate in the form of the cross, the remainder of the hour she stood with her arms extended. She then employed the time remaining in thanksgivings and prayers for all men. At two o'clock she went to Matins with the community, and at four o'clock she re-entered her chamber, when her pains took possession of her until six o'clock. At six she went to make her meditation with the community. She confessed, and received holy communion. She then employed an hour and a half in the contemplation of the Lord. The remainder of the day was

occupied in the offices of the convent and in writing, when her confessor required it. Then she was engaged an hour in oraison. At six she partook of a small portion of food, and at seven she went to compline. Finally, retired to her cell, she made her examination of conscience, and other devotions, and took her two hours of sleep. Her usual food consisted of herbs and vegetables, and of these she took only as much as was necessary. She ate but once a day. She went, nevertheless, to the refectory, but it was only to kiss the feet of the others, to ask their pardon kneeling, or to prostrate herself at the door, so as to be trodden under foot. She fasted three times a week on bread and water, and on Fridays she drank nothing. She took the discipline five times daily, and sometimes she lost much blood.

All the ordinary penances, besides others, on extraordinary occasions, were more painful to her than to others, because she was of a delicate complexion, and, besides, the Lord often miraculously augmented her sensibility to pain. But to her it seemed always as if she did nothing; for, reflecting upon what she owed Him, she forgot all that she had suffered.

In her ecstasies, her love of souls was more and more inflamed, and this love becoming

strong as death, and its zeal inflexible, her soul was pierced with poignant sorrow. In this state, the Lord sometimes made known to her His will, that she should labor for His creatures; and she offered herself to suffer, and even to give her life, if it were necessary, for the salvation of a single soul.

One day, after having communicated, while in ecstasy, the Lord showed to her, in a wonderful manner, the whole universe by abstractive images. Among the multitudes of those who neither professed nor confessed the faith, His Divine Majesty declared to her, that they who were the least disposed to be converted, and to whom His mercy was most inclined, were the Gentiles of New Mexico. The communication of these lights continued, and the Lord showed her with greater distinctness those kingdoms and provinces of Indians, commanding her to pray and labor for them. He gave her a distinct knowledge of their manners and customs, their dispositions, and their great need of the ministers of God. The faithful servant was excited always more and more to labor and to prayer. Then the Lord, whose judgments are impenetrable, and whose ways are incomprehensible, operated in her, and by her, one of the greatest wonders, which has commanded the admiration of ages.

CHAPTER IV.

MIRACLES WHICH GOD WROUGHT BY HER IN AMERICA.—
THE MANIFESTATION OF TRANSCENDENT GRACES CEASES.
—HER HIDDEN LIFE—HER SUFFERINGS.—HER COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE ANGELS AND SAINTS.

WHILE she prayed for these souls, the Lord placed her in ecstasy, and it seemed that she found herself—she knew not by what means—in a totally different region, and in the midst of Indians. It appeared that she saw them—that she found the climate of their country warmer than her own; and the Lord commanded her to preach the faith, and she seemed to preach to the Indians in her Spanish language, and they understood her, and she understood them. She wrought prodigies in confirmation of the faith. The Indians were converted, and she catechized them.

This wonderful state was renewed, and more than five hundred times it seemed to her that she was transported into that country, and that a great nation and its king were con-

verted to the faith of Jesus Christ. She saw the monks of St. Francis, and counselled the Indians to send some of their people to invite these religious to come among them, informing them where they were to be found.

The servant of God communicated all these strange things to her confessor. The report was current, among religious of both sexes, that she had been conveyed, bodily, to the Indies. The truth is, that a woman—whether it was the servant of God herself, or some angel in her form—wrought these wonders. The religious who were in New Mexico were surprised at the arrival among them of a great troop of Indians, who demanded to be baptized. Who had instructed them? It was, they said, a woman, whom, by their description, they recognized to be a nun.

Father Alonzo de Benavides, a devout man, moved by his zeal for the good of souls, sent to them some of his religious. Finding them already sufficiently instructed, they baptized the king and his family, and a great number of persons, so that Christianity flourished in those provinces. Meanwhile, the fathers desired to know who was that servant of God who had been the instrument, in the hands of the Almighty, of doing so much good. Father Alonzo

de Benavides, some years after, found cause to return to Spain. He arrived in Madrid in 1630, and conferred with the Rev'd Minister-General, on the principal affair which had brought him to Europe. The Father Bernardin, of Sienna, who had examined her, doubted not that it was Sister Mary of Jesus, and appointed Father Alonzo his commissioner to her.

Father Benavides arrived at Agreda, and, having exhibited the letters of the General, he went to the convent with the confessor, and a religious of great reputation, to interrogate the servant of God. She replied, in virtue of obedience, and declared, with much prudence, the time, the beginning, and the progress of these marvellous events. The father interrogated her respecting the particular marks of places, and the occupations and modes of living among the Indians; and, while giving him the proper names of the provinces, she confessed that she had seen this father there, fixing the day, the hour, and place where she had seen him, and the religious who accompanied him.

Father Benavides, with the Provincial and the confessor, made a written report of these facts. Their conjecture was, that she had been carried, bodily, to the Indies; but this was an exaggeration, for the servant of God said, in refer-

ence to this point : "That which I think the most certain, is, that an angel appeared in my form, and that the Lord showed me, here, in oraison, what passed there."

The servant of God gave a letter to the father for the religious who were employed at these conversions; and, having returned to New Mexico, he related to his assembled brethren how he had found in Spain her who had wrought the wonders of which they had been witnesses. Father Alonzo wrote an account of these facts, which is preserved in the archives of the Custodia, and a copy of it was sent in 1668, which has served to prepare this memoir.

II.—The servant of God was subjected to an insupportable martyrdom, as soon as her ecstasies became noised abroad. The attention of seculars was excited. The religieuses opened the grating so that they could see her. They drew aside the veil, and showed how she could be moved by a breath. A vain babbler told her of it. It is impossible to express the mortification of the servant of God, when she was assured of the truth. She locked herself up; but the religieuses, removing a board from the door, carried her to the choir, as easily as a feather. She had no consciousness of it; but she said, afterwards, that, if she had been put in

the pillory, she should have suffered less than in hearing of what they had done.

During three years she had endured this kind of publicity. She supplicated the Lord to withdraw these favors, and used all human means to conceal them. At last the Lord sent her superiors who provided remedies, and He granted her prayer in causing to cease all that excited observation. The religieuses who had judged of her sanctity only by these prodigies, were dissatisfied. Some said she had been under the influence of a good spirit; others suspected some secret sin. The servant of God endured these affronts with joy, but she suffered from the absence of the Lord. The demon then dared to propose to restore the ecstasies if she would make a compact with him. But, armed by faith, and inflamed by charity, she detested and drove him from her presence.

III.—The servant of the Lord besought her Divine Master to conduct her, by secret ways, unknown to the world. The Lord promised it, and, from that time, she felt a great change in her interior. Her elevations of spirit were admirable: the superior portion of her soul soared towards God: its powers were absorbed in the Divinity, and she received sublime revelations and instructions in a manner purely intel-

lectual. In her exterior nothing extraordinary was apparent.

The servant of God discusses the degrees, the modes, and the effects of this communication in the 2d chapter, book i. of the history of the Blessed Virgin. She continued in this way during her life, the divine light always increasing in her to the last. She now made a new rule of life, and wrote thirty-three counsels, which she practised. These are the principal: "To go in every thing against my will, and do nothing according to its appetites; never to commit any sin, nor imperfection, with deliberate intention; to be devoted to the Blessed Virgin; to offer to the Eternal Father the merits of His most holy Son—His blood, and the treasures of the holy Church—praying to Him for the salvation of souls, by the love which He bears them; to put myself always in the lowest place."

The extraordinary merit of Sister Mary of Jesus won the hearts of the community. They changed their opinions, and, becoming convinced of her great worth, they persevered in sustaining her. Meanwhile, the Lord dilated the interior powers of her soul, and she received communications, without causing any embarrassment to her exterior occupations. In this eminent

state she discovered the profound mysteries hidden in the life of Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother. Although the visions and revelations she now enjoyed were intellectual, she had, sometimes, imaginary, and even corporeal visitations. But as soon as she felt that the visions, or expressions, came by the imagination, or the senses, she placed herself in indifference, called up her faith, and thus left no room for the suggestions of the demon. She received her favors only as a means whereby to serve God more entirely.

IV.—The attacks of the demon did not cease. During their continuance she had no fear ; but, afterwards, her miseries so oppressed her spirit, that the enemy made her apprehend she might not be in the right way. Sometimes he excited disquiet by means of creatures. At others, he impressed his suggestions on her imagination with such force, that she was unable to expel them from her mind. He made “mountains out of molehills,” and endeavored to persuade her that all which had happened arose from the imagination, or natural causes. He pretended that this was the voice of conscience, and the counsel of God himself. To withdraw her from obedience, he insinuated that she deceived her

confessors. From these followed the sadness, affliction and obscurity that filled her soul.

The servant of God, in this painful condition, was admirable. She sought after God by faith. She humbled herself, acknowledging her nothingness, and confessed all her sins. This remedy alone satisfied her. Her sufferings in this way, during her life, cannot be expressed. "What surprises me," said she to her confessor, "is, that I am not more experienced; whence I conclude there is, in these sufferings, a divine intention." We shall again refer to these extraordinary combats.

V. The object of all these favors bestowed upon the servant of God, was to prepare her to make known to the world the "*Divine life of the Most Blessed Virgin.*" God, who proportions means to their ends, gave her, besides her guardian angel, five other angels, who made themselves visible to her. Their communications served to enlighten, instruct, correct, and advise her. Sometimes they sent forms into her imagination when the Lord spoke with her in this superior part, and at other times they cleared up her difficulties.

She wrote a short treatise on what the celestial spirits taught her touching the direction of the spiritual life. In her hidden life, the angels

conducted her as the superior angel illuminates the inferior. They thus prepared her during many years. One day, the Lord manifested to her, in Himself, the glory of His saints, and said: "Be faithful to me; love me much; dilate your heart, and place it in my hands. I desire that your conversation shall be only with me, my angels, and my saints. I give you two of my elect." St. Agnes and St. Ursula appeared, and she felt that these glorious virgins were as if present with her continually.

The two saints gave her instructions upon the fidelity of the spouse of the Most High—of the employment of the superior part of the soul—of the modest deportment of the inferior part, and the manner of acting towards creatures. The servant of God found these counsels so advantageous, that she wrote a little treatise, which she communicated to her confessor. She lived as if in glory amid these heavenly occupations.

CHAPTER V.

SHE IS ELECTED SUPERIOR.—GOVERNMENT OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN FOR HER.—FIRST COMMANDMENT TO WRITE THE HISTORY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.—NEW AFFECTIONS.—HER INFUSED SCIENCE.—THE LAWS SHE RECEIVES AS SPOUSE.

SHE had passed three years in the eminent state of which we have spoken, when His Divine Majesty ordained that she should be Superior of the community, for the good of her sisters. The Divine Providence disposed all with power and gentleness. It was in the year 1627, the eighth of the foundation of the monastery, that the Superiors had the inspiration to appoint, as the Superior, Mary of Jesus. The Lord had, as we have hinted, forewarned His servant on the subject, by manifesting to her His will. It was one of the most grievous trials that could have been inflicted upon her, for her profound humility was disturbed by it.

She addressed herself to God, praying Him to remove from her this bitter cup, but all was of

no avail. The Lord had implanted within her so tender a devotion to the Queen of angels, and so great a confidence in her goodness, that she undertook nothing without invoking her aid. She therefore poured forth her heart in the presence of the Virgin Mother. The merciful Queen appeared to her, and said: "My dear child, be consoled; I will be Mother and Superior for you, and also for your children; I will supply your deficiencies; you shall be the instrument by which I will accomplish the will of my Son and my God."

The humble servant yielded to the Divine will. The Superiors appointed her president on the festival of St. Joseph, 1627, and, after having obtained a dispensation, on account of her youth, from Rome, she was elected abbess, to the great joy of the community. The Queen of Angels acquitted herself of the promise she had made. The Lord confirmed it, saying, that He gave her His Blessed Mother for Superior, that she should obey her as her faithful disciple.

From this epoch the communication of the Mother of God with this creature continued to be intimate, frequent, and sublime. She directed her, gave her counsel, corrected her defects, and imbued her with heavenly doctrine. The servant of God accused herself every night of her

faults, prostrate before the Queen of Heaven, to recognize her superiority. She also placed in the middle of the choir an image of the Mother of God, and at her feet the rules and seal of the convent, which are the insignia of government. When she dedicated the history of the Queen of Angels to her sisters, she found it necessary to reveal to them this mystery, and henceforth the nuns called this holy image their Superior.

II. The marvellous effects of this government of the Mother of God were visible both in their spiritual and temporal affairs. In less than eleven years the servant of God formed this monastery in the inviolable observance of the rules, and in conformity to the constitution of the Recollects. She established there usages so holy, and exercises so sublime, and observances so devout, that nothing better could be desired for the highest perfection of a religious community. In her administration the golden mean was observed between too great zeal and too much indulgence; the reins of regular discipline were held firmly, without doing violence to the infirmities of nature.

The venerable mother, Mary of Jesus, with eminent holiness governed this monastery during thirty-five years; for when the election depended on the community, they applied to the

nuncios, for dispensations to enable them to re-elect her. The servant of God besought the generals of the order to release her from this position; and, finally, in 1652, she prevailed on the nuncio to refuse a dispensation. It was permitted by God, that her sisters might see in her a model of the most perfect obedience, and appreciate the value of her government. At the end of three years she was re-elected, and continued to be, by dispensation, until her death.

When she was first Superior, or, rather, the Vicar of the Queen of Heaven, she undertook to build a new convent, having in her possession only forty francs. But the church and the other buildings were completed in less than seven years, without any diminution of the funds of the community. The church was consecrated by the bishop with extraordinary pomp, in the midst of a concourse of people and clergy assembled from many leagues around. She maintained an unbroken calm in regard to all the material wants of the community, although the Lord allowed them sometimes to touch the limits of extreme necessity.

III. In 1627 the Most High began to declare to the servant of God His holy will that she should write the life of the Virgin Mother. The Lord having inspired her with a most ardent

devotion for His holy Mother, she desired to prepare a treatise which should be pleasing to her. In this view she wrote what had been communicated to her on the praises and prerogatives of the Mother of God. This treatise was greatly applauded, but it was doubted that she was the author. She was examined on this subject, and it was discovered that this admirable treatise was as nothing in comparison to the Divine knowledge contained within her soul.

She offered an humble resistance, as may be seen in the *Introduction* to the history of the Blessed Virgin. The Lord gave her ten years to prepare for it—His Divine Providence also procured a confessor capable, learned, prudent, and pious, to assist her. Father Francis André de la Torre had the inspiration to consecrate himself to the conduct of this soul, and he directed her during twenty years, to the time of his death, excepting rare absences by the order of his Superiors.

IV. The Lord now granted to her a new infused science, perspicuous and general; but whether it is that science, even infused, brings with it the danger of some sinful complaisance, or that the human understanding has need, in order to use the heavenly light with liberty, to be purified in the crucible, the servant of God was

plunged into new afflictions. She was cast into a night of complete obscurity, which lasted eighty days, and the light of faith was her only guide. The demons had ample power to afflict and to tempt her. Lucifer, accompanied by his legions, continued his attacks during this entire period. They consisted of horrible visions, terrible voices, unheard-of cruelties; he even went so far as to blaspheme by her mouth. He transfigured himself into an angel of light; he feigned miracles, and dared to present her with holy water, but was unable to resist its effects.

The Lord manifested to the servant of God after this combat, that the demons had attacked her by more than a thousand dangerous temptations; but Mary of Jesus, armed with the buckler of faith, had won a complete victory. At length the permission of the Lord ceased, and the demons fled. She had also a dangerous illness, in which the approaches of death were represented to her. Finally, she was placed in view of hell, and as if in this horrible pit. It was the last proof which the Lord imposed to elevate this creature to the sublimity of infused science.

V. After this tenebrous night, the Most High disclosed to her the secrets and mysteries of His wisdom. He bestowed on her a more dis-

inct intelligence of the Church Militant, with the grace and gifts which He communicates to mortals in this valley of tears. She was endowed with a more eminent knowledge of the Church Triumphant, of the essential glory of the angels and saints, and of accidental glory. The infinite perfections of God and His attributes were manifested to her in a degree above the ordinary power of grace.

This illumination was habitual to her, and permanent. She penetrated the meanings of the Scriptures, and understood Latin, without being able to speak it, and she obtained the use of the most proper terms of scholastic and mystical theology. But this knowledge did not make her less humble; she never spoke of it unless in obedience to her Superiors. All these lights contributed only to augment her love for God, to serve Him, and labor to persuade others to love Him.

After these favors the Lord called her to a higher perfection, by an interior voice, gentle and efficacious. He represented to her His innumerable benefits, and engaged her to correspond with them. She sought, like the thirsty hart, to please the Lord, and in her pains of love, she ejaculated, "I pray Thee, Lord, to grant me that high perfection which Thou wilt in me, and the instructions necessary to practise it!"

VI. She was already the spouse of the Most High, and to perfect her in this state, the Divine Majesty regulated His love, and prescribed inviolable laws for her, commanding her to write them as a rule of life, and to communicate them to her Superiors. She therefore wrote, inspired by her Divine spouse, an admirable treatise, entitled "*The laws of the spouse, the elevations of her chaste love, and instruction in the Divine science.*" This treatise has three parts, under the metaphor of the construction of the temple of Solomon. The first teaches how to prepare and polish the materials—that is to say, the senses and faculties of the soul; the second, how to form the virtues; and the third, how God communicates Himself in a sublime way to the soul.

During many years this humble virgin practised these Divine laws. Inflamed by the love of her spouse, she had a holy zeal for His honor. She labored incessantly that her Well-Beloved might not be offended. To this effect she interposed the merits of the passion of the Redeemer, and practised painful works on behalf of sinners. She wrought great good, but it is enough to say here that in this way she became capable of serving as the instrument to write the great work of the admirable history of the Mother of God, to reform morals and sanctify souls.

CHAPTER VI.

SHE WRITES FOR THE FIRST TIME THE HISTORY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.—FRUITS THAT SHE GAINS FROM THIS HISTORY.—NEW ORDER OF LIFE.—ELEVATION OF HER STATE.

IT was now ten years since she had begun to know the will of heaven, when renewed orders were positively given to write the Divine history, and the narration of the mystical city of God for the glory of the Most High, the honor of the Mother, and the sanctification of the faithful. Seeing herself obliged to yield, in her perplexity she had recourse to her confessor. He, too, who, during ten years, had understood all, decided that she must obey, and the Superiors whom he consulted were of the same opinion.

Thus confirmed by obedience, the venerable Mother began, in 1637, to write the history of the Queen of Angels. In only twenty days she had completed the first part. The Divine light, and the intelligence of the mysteries of which she wrote, were so vivid, that her pen could not keep

pace with their impetuosity. The Lord concealed from the demon the commencement of the work, lest he should retard it, and in order that it should be evident, from the extreme rapidity with which it was written, that it sprang from Divine power.

II. When the demon knew of this first part, foreseeing that souls would be greatly benefited by it, he employed all his stratagems to prevent its continuance. In her apprehensions of having offended God, she employed her time in appeasing the Lord, and thus it was delayed; but at length it was finished. Who can describe the fervent affections of that inflamed heart while writing this history? The attention she was obliged to give to the light imparted to her, and the occupation of writing, had interrupted her ardor to imitate the Queen of Heaven, but in composing the last chapters, moved by a Divine impulse, she exclaimed: "Lord, may Thy will be done in me; I offer myself to obey Thy orders with submission." At these words she saw descending from heaven an angel of wondrous beauty, who had orders to instruct, reprove, and humble her. He said to her: "O soul! follow the steps of thine august Mistress, the Blessed Virgin, practise her precepts, imitate her virtues, and be faithful in all that regards the service of

our Lord." In this disposition she finished the history of the Blessed Virgin.

Having completed the work, the Lord excited her to a keen sorrow for her sins, and appeared to her in a vision. It seemed that He presented her to the eternal Father, and said: "We have lifted up this soul from the dust of her misery, that she might write the history of my Mother, because our Divine providence has determined that in an age so overgrown with sins and offences against Thy Majesty we should reveal the history of my Mother as a remedy. It is but right that the soul who has written this doctrine should practise it." The most Blessed Virgin made the same request, and the eternal Father granted it. Then the memory of her past sins, of her ingritudes, and negligencies became still more grievous, and the servant of God wept bitterly, when she heard a voice declare: "The days of this creature are ended; dead to the world, she is born for God." The Redeemer applied to her the merits of His blood, and the most holy Trinity confirmed her in the name of Mary, that she might practise the doctrine of the history she had written.

The Lord imprinted upon her a lively horror of sin, and disclosed to her the sweetness of the Divine yoke. He showed her the faults she had

committed, and seeing her contrite and confused, and unable to restore one for a thousand, He confirmed her in her state as spouse. She was then returned to the Mother of the King, in order to be prepared. The Queen of Heaven instructed her in the first place, to renounce all honors, pleasures, and conveniences, and all human favors, and to seek for labors and sufferings, that she might bear some resemblance to her spouse. Thus she became crucified to the world, and lived no more in it, nor for it, but Jesus lived in her, and she for Jesus. The merciful Mother instructed her how to cast off the bad habits contracted by her sins, her imperfections, and unmortified passions, and to purify her imagination of the images produced by intercourse with the world. She adorned her with rich ornaments, and showed her the lofty habitation of her interior, where she could be sheltered from the attacks of her enemies.

III. The servant of God prepared a treatise on these instructions of the Lord and His holy Mother, entitled, "*The laws of the spouse; her considerations and sighs to obtain the last and true end—the good pleasure of her Divine Spouse.*" To this she added a short treatise, "*The excellences and the virtues of the Mother of God,*" to carry always about her. She wrote it because she heard a

voice, in the superior portion of her soul, which said: "You have need of a mistress to conduct you; of a mother to protect you; of a friend to console you; of a queen to obey; of an example to rule your life; of a model of all the virtues. Now, all these you will find in Mary."

She composed another little treatise, called "Meditations on the Passion of our Redeemer," taken from the second part of the Divine history. The interior voice said to her: "Place here the passion of the Lord; let it be food for your understanding, consolation for your spirit, occupation for your mind, and you will draw from it abundant fruits for your soul." In this same book she wrote the exercises that she practised, prayers, sublime meditations, useful devotions, the order of her life, distribution of time, and the fervent elevations of her spirit. She completed it in 1641, and it did not meet the fate of her other writings, which, as we shall see, she afterwards burnt.

She passed ten years in this employment of disciple of the Mother of God, receiving great and frequent favors, mingled with many extraordinary afflictions. The Lord then bestowed on her an admirable privilege, which was continued to the end of her life. This was, that all His communications should be preceded by so

great a sorrow for her sins, that her heart seemed broken. The love and fear of God, and contempt for herself, accompanied this sorrow. With this disposition she received all the Divine favors. At the least fault or imperfection she was reprov'd so severely, that she was lost in contrition and humility. The Lord favored this creature with a singular participation in all the gifts and graces which had been accorded to His Mother, though in a very inferior degree, but in kind the same. One of these gifts was the knowledge of created things in themselves, without mistake; the other was an impetuous communication of the light of truth, and the power of grace, which instructed her, not to permit an affection for any earthly thing in this vale of tears, even when lawful and honest. It was permissible for her to love God alone, and her neighbor in Him, and to labor, according to her condition, for the salvation of souls.

IV. In her fervor, the servant of God had collected a great number of vocal prayers, which she habitually recited. But, after having been elevated to a high infused contemplation, these prayers embarrassed her. It seemed that she ought to dispense with the least perfect; yet she feared to abandon the use of devotions which

she had so long practised. Her confessor decided to diminish them. He left her the Divine office—the little office of our Lady—her litanies, the chaplet, her *Pater* and *Ave*, the visit to the altars, five disciplines a day, the exercise of the cross, and that of death. He permitted her to read the *Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine*, according to her custom, from childhood. He also moderated her austerities.

When she was Superior, he decided that she must follow the rules of the community. The docile Superior obeyed, and conformed herself to the community in regard to all external things. In 1633 she introduced the Divine office at midnight, as it is used among the Recollects of St. Julian, which led to the change in her exercises. Her vocal prayers were moderated in 1644. She never refused her assistance to any one. She visited and consoled the sick, gave counsel, and found means to help all. She was never idle.

V. She conducted all her actions after the manner of the angels, never losing sight of God, and making frequent interior acts of adoration, praise, respect, and love. In her oraison, her contemplation was sublime. She assisted at the holy sacrifice with great devotion. In the confessional, her confessors were astonished to see

so much sorrow, and such resolutions to correct faults so trivial that they could scarcely discover an imperfection. The angels, perhaps, were in admiration, when she received Holy Communion. At the refectory, she considered that if she responded so little to the natural benefits of the Lord, she did still less for the supernatural favors, so great and so multiplied, which she received.

Every day she practised some mortification. On Monday she prostrated herself at the door of the refectory, that she might be trodden under foot; on Thursdays she kissed the feet of her sisters; on Fridays she remained on her knees, imploring mercy for her sins. In the duties of her office she acted with admirable humility and wisdom, governing with gentle severity and modest authority. She treated her sisters with maternal affection, and took great pains to supply their necessities. She loved them, without respect to persons. She chastened offences against God, and forgot those which were against herself. In fine, she took counsel of all, in grave affairs, and obeyed the counsels even of her inferiors.

In her associations with persons of the world she was very careful not to lose her interior recollection. She closed her eyes, guarded her

hearing and her tongue, and gave utterance only to words of discretion, full of humility and charity. When it was necessary, she stimulated others to practise virtue, with heavenly prudence. She had written many sentences, from which we quote this: "*The Divine anger moves slowly to vengeance, but the delay of punishment is compensated by the greatness of torment.*"

In this abridgment much must be omitted of the graces she received, and of the pains, the absences, and the combats that accompanied them. The Divine spouse formed, by this varied treatment, a spiritual life that obtained the admiration of the angels, when they saw rising, as it were, from the desert, a creature so blessed and so united to her Well-Beloved.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SERVICES SHE RENDERS TO THE CHURCH.—HER INTERVIEW AND CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE KING OF SPAIN.—CONSO-LATIONS, SPIRITUAL AND CORPOREAL, WHICH THE FAITHFUL RECEIVE FROM IT.—HER SOLICITUDE FOR HER DAUGHTERS.—SHE BURNS HER WRITINGS.—HER MYSTIC DEATH.

THE Providence of God, in proportion as men, by their enormous sins, provoke the Divine wrath, raises up souls of eminent sanctity to appease His outraged justice. It is easy to perceive that Mary of Jesus was one of these, who, far better than the other Esther, found grace before the King of the Universe. In the year 1630 the Lord manifested to her the approaching calamities of His Church, saying that He could have wished to find another Moses to oppose himself to His anger.

His Divine Majesty, in 1637, began to show her the assemblies held by the demons in hell against the holy Church and the faithful, and against Spain in particular, as she wrote, twenty

years later, to Pope Alexander VII. She saw that they determined to stir up wars against the Christian princes, the better to sow heresies without difficulty. With this view many legions spread themselves over the world. The servant of God prayed and groaned before God, and the Lord replied to her that this was a chastisement for the sins of Catholics ungrateful for His benefits. The war soon broke out. She saw the Church like a bark agitated by the impetuous waves of affliction, while the faithful, ecclesiastics and seculars, sought no remedy for it. She was afflicted, but the Mother of God excited her to pray with redoubled ardor. It seemed to her that His Divine Majesty had elevated her to this holy and sublime state for the good of the people of God, that she might labor for them. From this time she made it her chief employment to implore the Divine clemency to turn away these scourges from Christendom.

She prayed with great fervor for Spain, who has preserved the purity of her faith in its integrity. She endeavored to diminish the faults of her children, who, being more enlightened and more favored, ought to commit fewer sins. The loving Lord, inclined to satisfy the desires of His servant, opened a way which could not have been imagined—it was, that a poor nun,

shut up in her cloister, should have a close, frequent, and even familiar communication with her Sovereign.

II. In the year 1643, King Philip IV., pressed by the wars of Catalonia and Portugal, on his way to Saragossa, took the road by Agreda. He wished to see the servant of God, and the first time he spoke with her he felt such virtue in her words that he went away consoled. He prayed her to be his mediatrix with God for his people and himself, and requested her to write to him of whatever she judged best for the service of God.* The venerable mother obeyed, and she began to exhort him through her letters to correct and reform the morals of his kingdom. The king experienced from them such good effects that he continued this holy intercourse of letters during twenty-two years, while the servant of God still lived. His majesty folded his paper in two, writing on one side with his own hand, and the servant of God replied on the other. The king died four months after Mary of Jesus.

III. The Lord so ordered that the faithful should come to her for consolation in their

* There was found recently, at the imperial library of Paris, a part of this correspondence, which has been translated and published under the title, "*The Sister Mary d'Agreda and Philip IV.*"

Inedited correspondence, translated from the Spanish by Germond de Lavigne. 1 vol., 8vo. Vaton, Paris.

troubles, and all found a remedy for either corporeal or spiritual afflictions. People of all sorts and conditions were gathered from many distant places; but she preferred the poor, who are generally destitute of human aid. She thus diminished, according to her ardent desires, the number of sinners, for, while administering to the body, she gave instructions for spiritual wants. The Lord, by a singular privilege of His grace, made known to her the state of their consciences.

The faithful, before leaving her, generally begged some souvenir as a memorial of her benefits. Unable to resist so pious a desire, the venerable Mother gave to each a cross, medal, image, rosary, or scapular. One day, in her retreat, recollecting the spiritual wants of these people, she prayed the Lord to grant the grace to withdraw from sin, or to avoid the occasion of it, and to be assisted at the hour of death, to all who would pray with devotion, having upon them some one of the objects that she gave—and the Lord heard her prayer. The servant of God left no means untried for the salvation of souls. She said to one of her Superiors, who desired her to inform him of what passed in her mind on this subject: "I cannot explain the ardent desires which the Most High has implanted in my soul for the salvation of the

people of New Mexico, and for the conversion of those who know Him not, or who are in a state of mortal sin." It often happened that she found herself surrounded by many guardian angels, who invited her to pray for the souls confided to their charge, and to suffer pains on their behalf. Sometimes the angel guardian of a soul informed her that it was in danger of perdition, that her prayers might deliver it; and many persons declared themselves to have been saved by the servant of God from dangers that menaced their eternal salvation.

IV. She especially extended her solitudes over the nuns of this happy monastery as her duty demanded. Her ardent desire that all might be holy made her endure a sort of martyrdom. She so acted as to blend prudence with her charity and zeal to advance them in perfection. With regard to the Rule of the Constitutions, and the regular observances, she never permitted any thing which could introduce the least relaxation. She neglected no duty. Above all, she had recourse to prayer, addressing herself to Jesus Christ, and to the Queen of Angels, and representing the promises they had made to her. She held conferences so fervent and so sublime, that the sisters said, if they had but profited by them, they would be sera-

phim in perfection. She persuaded them to make frequent spiritual exercises of such a kind, that she who made them, could assist at all the exercises of the community. They vied with each other in the practice of virtue. In a word, she procured for her sisters, by all possible means, the grace of the Lord. Each of them, in imitation of her, wore an image of Jesus Christ; and she obtained for those who used them with devotion, powerful helps to excite them more and more in the Divine love. She also obtained, that those who prayed with devotion before the image in the choir should find there a sure asylum, and grace to protect them against the demon, and in temptations.

V. In the year 1643, her confessor, father Francis André, was obliged to be absent for a considerable time. An ancient religious was put in his place to confess the servant of God. He, having little understanding of her affairs, declared to her that women ought not to write, and that, therefore, through obedience, she must burn the history of our Lady, and all her other papers. As soon as the order was received, and without reply, she burned all the manuscripts that were within her power.

The principal confessor, on his return, reproved her sharply, and, persuaded that it was

very important to preserve an original, written by the hand of the servant of God, he commanded her to write it over again. But, during the eighteen months that remained before the death of this father, the servant of God was hindered in the work, the Lord so disposing it for His own purposes. Father Francis André de la Torre died in 1647, on St. Joseph's Day, after having assisted the servant of God nearly twenty years. He left all the writings of Mary of Jesus, with orders to transmit them to the Provincial, but she persuaded his agent to give them to her. The Superiors having appointed for her the same confessor who had caused the other papers to be burned, he burned these also! This loss was irreparable; but the judgments of God, who permits it, are impenetrable.

The Lord finally gave her such a confessor as she had need of in her present circumstances. This was father Andrew de Fuen Mayor. He began to confess the servant of God in 1650, and she continued to confess to him during the remainder of her days. This confessor obliged her to write a second time the history of the Blessed Virgin. Finally, informed of the principal events which had passed in her interior during the whole course of her life, he obliged her to undertake the history of it, which was a

great mortification to her. Nevertheless, obedience works miracles. She commenced, but she could write little more than the foundation of her monastery, and the lives of its fathers. Death surprised her in this work, which would have contained reproductions of all the treatises that she had written, which had been burnt, and in a heavenly manner, for the lights of her last years were the most sublime and abundant. But we must not question the judgments of the Most High, who has not permitted us to possess them.

VI. When the Lord renewed the order to write a second time the history of His holy Mother, she knew that His Divine Majesty designed to elevate her to a new state. She employed seventy-two days to prepare herself for a general confession in 1651, and thirteen days were occupied in her confession. This preparation was followed by a mystical death. The Lord several times repeated this grace, yet none could say she had ever receded. The new life of the spirit, which is the mystic death, has various degrees; and the servant of God obtained many times this new life, without losing that which she had received.

The venerable Mother, well knew these degrees, in the deaths she had experienced, and, being elevated to a new life, all that she had

hitherto done for God seemed but an invisible point, in proportion to the obligations she discovered still remaining. Nevertheless, the Lord did not exempt her in these deaths from combats with the world, nor from the temptations of the demon, nor from the tumults excited by the flesh, the passions, and the appetites; nor did He destroy her enemies so as not to deprive her of the merit of combating them, but He enfeebled them, in order that the victory should declare for her in the conflict.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEGREES OF HER HIGHEST PERFECTION.—SHE WRITES ANEW THE HISTORY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.—HER LAST STATE.—GRATUITOUS GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.—HER PREPARATION FOR DEATH, AND PREDICTIONS CONCERNING IT.

IT was the Lord's will that the servant of God should henceforth apply herself to the imitation of the Queen of Angels, no longer as a disciple, but as her daughter. Mary of Jesus called this state *religion*, and she began it by a novitiate. The Mother of God willed to constitute herself her mistress of novices; she adopted her as her daughter, engendered in her love. The servant of God entered upon this novitiate of the imitation of the Mother of God, on the day of the Purification of the Virgin, in the year 1652, in quality of daughter. She copied in herself, with all possible exactitude, the virtues of the Queen of Angels, having always her example before her eyes. And after being exercised in this observance, she made a vow of the most sublime nature that had ever

yet been heard of. Renewing in the hands of the Mother of God her four vows, she made a fifth, to obey her in the instructions which she gave as her mistress.

She made this vow in one of the most exalted visions to which the Lord had then elevated her, and she felt that the most pure Virgin, on confirming it, gave her in recompense a spiritual embrace. We may infer from this vow a perfection of life beyond all expression. It is only necessary to read the instructions given to her by the Mother of God, in the *Cité Mystique*, and to remember that the servant of God executed them with fidelity.

The Lord elevated her to a degree still higher. After having passed some time in the imitation of the Most Blessed Virgin, the Most High placed her in another, of the immediate imitation of Jesus Christ. The Divine Jesus would be her master, and commanded her to imitate Him, until her soul should arrive at a sort of resemblance with her celestial Spouse. He promised her, that if she observed the laws of this state, all the promises of the Gospel would be renewed in her.

On the day of the Assumption, in the year 1653, the Lord lifted her into a still more sublime state than she had yet known in her

mortal life. He placed her in the novitiate of contemplation of the Essence of God. This novitiate is a state of union with God, in which His Divine Majesty lives in the soul, by being, mystically, its life, the virtue of its virtue, the movements of all its being, and the vivifying power of all its actions.

These three novitiates are like the degrees of different elevations, each of which is more lofty than the preceding. The servant of God ascended from one to the other, the first preparing her for the second, and these two for the third. But it is worthy of observation here, that she did not leave the lowest degree to mount to the highest, for each is a preparation for the next in order, and necessary for its security; neither can the highest be attained except through the two first. The Lord gave this counsel to His servant, viz., that the novitiate of the imitation of the most pure Mary prepared her for that of the imitation of Jesus Christ; for the Mother is the immediate entrance to the Son, and the novitiate of the imitation of Jesus Christ and His evangelical doctrine would conduct her to the sublimity of the Essence of God; since the Son is the way to the Father, and all who seek for God must go through His only Son, who conducts them to Him.

Two years and a half after this, on the day of the Assumption, the servant of God was elevated (whether she was in the body, or out of the body, she knew not,) before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, and she made, in presence of the Incarnate Word, and of His most pure Mother, her profession of the state of daughter and imitatrice of this Queen. And it was as if the Most High confirmed her in this state.

II. The Lord then reiterated His orders to write the second time the history of the Queen of Angels. Her confessor seconded them, and her Superiors obliged her to obey. In the year 1655 she began it anew, in the form in which the original, written by her hand, exists at this time. The demon made every effort, and practised every ruse that his malice could suggest, to hinder the work. She wrote at no period when she was not sensible that all the fury of hell opposed it. The infernal dragon hoped she would die before its completion, and he would not have been mistaken, if the Lord had not miraculously preserved her life, as the angels revealed to the servant of God.

Mary of Jesus, in the midst of these combats, wrote this history, imitating, as closely as possible, the august Queen of Heaven. At the same time she applied herself with care to learn in

the holy gospels whatever she ought to know, in order to imitate her Divine Master. The chief counsel that she received from the Lord in this school was to suffer without repugnance, to embrace pain with pleasure, to take up her cross, and to follow Jesus Christ with fervor. The demon gave her matter for suffering.

The serpent came to ask permission of the Lord to persecute her, as he did formerly for Job. The permission of God being given, she was soon sensible of a species of cruel martyrdom, without consolation either divine or human. She found no consolation even in her confessor. But she suffered in great tranquillity, endeavoring to imitate her adorable Master. At length, triumphing over hell, she finished her admirable work.

III. The servant of God continued her life in the three states of imitation of the Mother of God—of novice, of the imitation of Jesus Christ, and of the contemplation of the Divine Essence, with great perfection, under a general law of the Divine love. She was attentive to the most holy will of her Well-Beloved, so as to do nothing that was not agreeable to Him. Having passed some years in these observances, the Lord crowned all His graces by calling her to the profession of these sublime

states of perfection, and it seemed that she could not rise higher in this mortal life; but God is an immense ocean of perfection.

Mary of Jesus had an admirable knowledge of the life, of all the operations, and of all the virtues, of the Mother of God, and she copied and imitated, with that inferior proportion which we must suppose, the virtues and the operations, interior and exterior, of the Queen of Heaven. By the protection of this powerful mediatrix, she was elevated to the imitation of Jesus Christ, and the Most High made her enter, by this door, to the sublime state of the contemplation of the Divine Essence, where she had the happiness to enjoy the intimate embraces of union with His Divine Majesty. Then, at the view of the glory and grandeur of God, she transformed herself into His image, in advancing from one light to another light—from the imitation of Mary to that of Jesus Christ—from the contemplation of the sacred humanity to that of the divinity, and from an affection inflamed, to a flame more ardent, by the movement of the Holy Spirit.

IV. Here would be the place to treat of the virtues in detail, but this would too much enlarge our abridgment. We will only add a few words on the gratuitous gifts with which her

soul was endowed for the benefit of others. She had the *gift of speaking with eminent wisdom*, as we see by her writings, which are admired by all the learned; *the gift of speaking with science*, which was evident to all those who were charged with her direction, and which is seen in the sublime instructions that she has left. *The gift of faith* is visible in her, by the services she rendered to the Church, principally in New Mexico. All her precautions to conceal her gift of *healing the sick* could not prevent its manifestation. The gift of *operation of the virtues* showed itself in the numerous conversions wrought by the venerable Mother upon various persons possessed by the demon. The *gift of prophecy* was very frequent. The gift of *the discernment of spirits* was so remarkable in this servant of God, that, by a singular grace of the Lord, she discovered the interior of the persons who had recourse to her. *The gift of speaking different tongues* was communicated to her—since, speaking Spanish to the Indians, they understood her as if she had addressed them in their own language; and, finally, the gift of *interpretation of tongues*, which her Superiors had many times occasion to remark.

IV. For a long time the venerable Mother, Mary of Jesus, had prepared for death. Her first occupation, after matins, was to meditate

upon the voice of the Most High, who called her to judgment. She wrote this meditation with considerations so full of awe, that they excite terror in reading them. She composed another meditation on the response which her soul would make at this terrible judgment. She expresses her sorrow for her sins—desires the last sacraments, and to have the assistance of priests at that awful hour. To this she adds two other meditations—one on the judgment of the righteous, and the reprobate soul; the other on the universal judgment, which she intersperses with considerations of fearful import.

She preserved, in a coffer, the bones of her father, and, when visiting them, she made sublime reflections, reading, afterwards, the recommendation of the soul. Every Friday she prepared herself for her last hour. From time to time she made retreats, to be better prepared. Finally, the Most High, by the prayers of the humanity of Jesus Christ and the Virgin, sent an angel to dispose her for a holy death.

VII. According to the example of many saints, she saw clearly the approaches of death. Desirous to perform the exercises of a retreat, she said to her sisters, who were disturbed by this absence from them: "It cannot be dispensed with, because I make it to prepare myself to

die well." After this retreat, she held the chapter on Monday, in place of Friday. "This will be the last that I shall hold," said she. She asked to have her feet washed. "Wash them well," she said to the sister, "for I shall soon receive Extreme Unction."

She had prayed the Lord to be assisted by His priests. Now it happened that the father, Zalizanes, left Madrid to preside at a chapter of his order: "Let us go," said he, "by Agreda, for the Lord calls me there." Father Samaniego, Provincial, also went there. The servant of God, who had fallen ill, enjoyed this great consolation, for the General visited her every day. From the commencement they saw that the sickness of the venerable Mother was mortal, and, when it was known, the sorrow was universal.

CHAPTER IX.

DEATH OF THE SERVANT OF GOD.

THE sickness of the servant of God lasted from the first vespers of Ascension Day to the day of Pentecost, on which she expired. The Lord granted her the grace of a good death, and it was not sudden. He left her in the one obscure light of faith, that the merit of the servant of God should manifest itself. On the third day of her sickness she confessed, with so many marks of perfect contrition for her sins, that the confessor was in admiration of it, and she confessed many times during her sickness, giving testimony of her exalted esteem for this sacrament.

On the Sunday within the octave of the Ascension, she received the holy Viaticum. The Superior commanded her to ask His Divine Majesty to prolong her life if it were His will, and to grant her the grace to be submissive to His most holy will. In this manner she practised obedience until her last moments. Every day

she received holy communion, for she took nothing until after having received this sacrament. She endured without complaint all her sufferings, and refused no remedies, although she knew they were of no avail.

She profited by every spiritual pain, and at last, on the Thursday of the Octave of the Ascension, her physicians judged that she ought to receive Extreme Unction. The Father-General, Zalizanes, announced this to the venerable Mother, who rejoiced on hearing of it. Towards evening she received it with touching devotion. "I begin," said she, "to console myself, and to take courage." She spoke with her sisters, and blessed each one in particular, giving them salutary counsels. Then she took leave of them, and returned to her recollection. She persevered in it until the day of Pentecost.

On this day, the Father-General gave her the benediction of St. Francis, and, surrounded by the most eminent religious of the order, and the nuns of her monastery, towards the hour of tierce, when it is thought the Holy Spirit descended upon His Apostles, without having lost her reason, or her senses, she yielded up her spirit to her Creator, to enjoy Him eternally in glory, as we may presume, from her life and her death. Before expiring she said: "Come!

come! come!" and at this last word, her spirit departed on the 24th of May, in the year of our Lord 1665.

Here terminates the recital of the Rev. Father Samaniego, which we have abridged with the most scrupulous exactitude; for the life which he has left us of the servant of God, is as accurate as it is full of unction. It is remarkable, especially, for the great mystical science which it reveals in its author, a very rare gift in these latter times. We shall now proceed to lay before the reader the acts and authentic documents which we have discovered, through which it is our desire to honor the servant of God, and to re-establish the memory of her glorious gifts and graces.

HISTORICAL NOTICE

OF

THE MYSTICAL CITY OF GOD,

(*From which the Admirable Life of St. Joseph is extracted,*)

CONTAINING THE PAPAL DECREES IN RELATION TO IT, THE APPROBATIONS OF MANY EMINENT SERVANTS OF GOD, ETC.

IN the highest rank among the saints of past ages, who have been endowed with signal graces and singular privileges by the august Queen of Heaven, must be placed, without hesitation, the Venerable Mary of Jesus, called of Agreda, from the name of the city in Spain where she passed her life. A writer, whose authority will not be suspected, the celebrated J. Goerres, in his monumental work on *Mysticism*, cites as an example, in the chapter entitled *Culminating Point of Christian Mysticism*, the life of Mary of Agreda; and, in fact, no more perfect model can be found of the most elevated ways of mystical perfection. As an example, she is *unique*, and most valuable as a study in this progress of the soul, which, according to the words of the prophet, rises from degree to degree, even to the summit of perfection: *ibant de virtute in virtutem*.

But another and more powerful motive makes it our duty to publish a rather extended notice on Mary of Jesus. It is our desire to call the attention of our readers to her great work, *The Cité Mystique*—The Mystical City.

During more than three years we have pursued our researches on this subject with an ever growing ardor, and we

have been so fortunate as to find irrefutable documents relating to it. In one of the libraries of Paris we have discovered the acts of the process for the canonization of the servant of God. Supported by these documents of unexceptionable authority, we advance, and hope to terminate all debates on this question. And after the publication of the papers which we are about to insert in this article, no one, we hope, among Christians, will be tempted to imagine that it is forbidden to read the works of Mary of Agreda, as it has been too frequently asserted.

There are divine and supernatural gifts so marvellous, that if all the authority of the holy doctors and that of the Church did not absolutely affirm them, we should be inclined to regard as doubtful. But doubt is permitted only to *ignorance and to bad faith*, and neither can justify a man at the tribunal of conscience, nor, consequently, at the tribunal of God.

The God of mercy grants to souls the privilege known under the name of *clear, distinct, and precise words, or supernatural expressions*, by which we mean, that God consents to speak to a soul, either directly and immediately, as it happens in certain cases, or by the ministry of angels, which is the most common. Sometimes it is the Father, sometimes the Son; at other times it is the august Mother of God, and, in rare circumstances, the saints, who discourse with souls in an elevated state of contemplation.

St. Teresa, whose authority in these matters is sovereign, because of the approbation which the Church has stamped on her writings, treats this question at length in the Interior Castle, Sixth Mansion, chap. iii. "God," she says, "makes His presence felt in various ways. It is effected by certain discourses, of different kinds, which He makes to the soul: some of them seem to come from without, others are profoundly interior; some seem to come from the superior part of the soul, others are so much in the exterior as to be heard by the ear." Alvarez de Paz adds that they seem sometimes

to issue from the depths of the heart.—*Interdum et ipso penetrati cordis assurgere*, vol. iii. bk. v. ch. 6.

The seraphic saint explains the means by which to distinguish the origin of these discourses, which may proceed from the imagination, or the demon, or from the Divine being. "When it is God who speaks," she continues, "suddenly He silences in us all other thoughts to make us attentive to what He says, and it is less in our power not to hear, than it is in the power of a person very quick at hearing not to hear what is said to him by another in a loud voice. When God speaks, it is beyond the power of the soul to stop the ears, or to think of any other thing than what it hears. I hope," she adds, "that I have correctly explained what regards these divine discourses, and imparted some useful advice to the souls whom the Divine Master may honor with such favors.

Suarez, and in him we hear all the doctors, explains the manner of operation. After a profound examination of the mode by which the angels communicate their thoughts to each other, he applies it to the souls to whom God imparts this gift. Suarez, Part II. book ii. chap. 27. Scaramelli, in his *Directorio mystico* treats this noble subject *ex professo*, and based on the doctrine of the great doctors, he developes, under every point of view, whatever relates to this matter Tract iv. chap. 14, 15.

We should add, that the servants of God who hear these supernatural and heavenly discourses, sometimes behold, under corporeal forms, the celestial personages who pronounce them, while at others they see nothing and hear the voice only.

The little we have said will suffice to attract the attention of priests, and engage them to study these wonders of grace. In view of the phenomena of magnetism and neo-spiritualism which now invade the world, they will come to a better understanding both of truth and error, and discern more clearly the snare which the angel of darkness labors to spread for men, in luring them either to the denial of what is super-

natural, or to the grossest delusions, into which he plunges the unhappy adepts of his tenebrous doctrines.

But let us hasten towards our object, and inquire, 1st. Whether it is permitted to any one, by whatever authority he may be invested, to forbid the reading of the works of Mary of Jesus d'Agreda? 2. Whether it be true that the reading of them is allowed, and that pious souls have nothing whatever to fear in regard to the doctrine which is taught in the *Mystical City of God*?

With regard to the first point our task is easy. Eleven years after the appearance of this work, which had already been translated into Italian, it suddenly became the subject of a lively discussion. The tribunal of the Holy Office "*in regard to the circumstances of the time*," according to the words of the postulator of the cause for the canonization of Mary of Jesus, issued a decree of prohibition August 4th, 1681.

But God, who brings good out of evil, caused the prohibition to contribute to the greater triumph of this work. In fact, three months later, Nov. 9th, 1681, the decree was revoked. We have the gratification to place here the authentic text of the decree of revocation. It is extracted from the process of canonization:—

Innocentius Papa XII.

In negotio librorum sanctimonialis Mariæ a Jesus de Agreda supersedendum duximus quamvis sacræ hujus inquisitionis ratio et stylus aliter suaderunt.

Datum Romæ sub annulo piscatoris, Nov. 9th, 1681.

The reader will, doubtless, inquire what is the force of this decree, and whether it has the veritable character of obligatory law in the Universal Church? On this point we need not even invoke the common teaching of the doctors. The sovereign authority has resolved the question, without leaving room for the smallest doubt or discussion. In 1713, the Holy

Office published a decree by which it prescribes to the Bishop of C—— to conform himself to the suspensory decree of Innocent XII., which prohibits him from forbidding the reading of the works of Mary of Jesus of Agreda. We subjoin the text of this decree.

Decree of the Holy Office.

“In the Congregation held Sept. 19th, 1713, when were present their Eminences, Cardinals Acciaioli, Spada, Ferrari, Fabroni, and Ottoboni, it was decreed, that the letter of the Inquisitor de C—— must be withdrawn, and that the suspensory decree has the force of law throughout the Universal Church.”

The original is in the Convent of Ara Cœli at Rome. We have, consequently, the right to declare that no one is permitted to forbid the reading of these works, and that whomsoever shall attempt such a prohibition must not only be disregarded, but even obliged to retract what he has had the boldness to utter. 2d. The Holy See, by permission of Divine Providence, has done more than merely to protect the works of Mary of Jesus against her adversaries,—the reading of them is formally permitted and encouraged. Pope Alexander VII., of holy memory, has expressly authorized them to be read, *oraculo vivæ vocis*. Finally, under Pope Benedict XIII., the sacred Congregation of Rites passed the following decree:—

“It is ordered that the cause of the above mentioned servant of God shall be continued before the holy Congregation of Rites without further examination of the *Cité Mystique*, and these books can be retained and read. March 14, 1729.”

This decree is signed by Pope Benedict XIII.

The tribunal of the Holy See having definitively decided the cause, the reader will not hesitate to seek his own edification in the doctrine of the works of this seraphic servant of God.

Having cited the authentic decrees of the Court of Rome, we shall now proceed to render justice to the works of the illustrious servant of God. It is nearly a year since the correspondence of Mary of Jesus with King Philip IV. of Spain was found in the Imperial library. These letters have been published by an editor of the *Revue de Paris* in one volume. In his review, M. Germond de Lavigne, in speaking of *The Cité Mystique*, thus expresses himself:—"We have read this astonishing book, this treatise *ex professo*, of the celebrated ascetic, and we can only say, with the doctors who have edited it, that the mysteries of the Christian religion, the principles of the Catholic Church, the most difficult texts of the Holy Scriptures and confused computations of the evangelical history, the most secret decrees of Divine Providence, of theology, sacred, dogmatic, exegetic, scholastic, moral, deliberative, mystical, all are here assembled. What are we to think of these sublime inspirations of the soul when it is disengaged from matter, when it is purified by contemplation and meditation? Is it really a revelation from on high?"—*Revue de Paris*, Dec. 15th, 1854; Jan. 1st, 1855.

Thus speaks a writer in a Review little suspected, we must admit, of any tendency towards mysticism. But the truth inspires him to make this precious avowal.

We will now offer a brief resumé of the opinions of those who are most competent to judge in these matters, viz., the members of religious orders, and universities who have made the most minute examination. Father Antoine, surnamed the very celebrated doctor, thus expresses himself:—"This book has enchanted me. Every line is clear and full of life: in a word, all that it contains contributes to elevate the soul, inflame the heart, and excite profound devotion." Father Andreas Mendo, of the Society of Jesus, says, "the entire work is like a continual light that illuminates the mind, and a flame that kindles the will. It banishes tepidity, and excites us to rise to the highest degrees of virtue. Whoever reads it

with care, cannot fail to be instructed, and will be stimulated to become more holy."

Father Dydace de Sylva, Benedictine, says, "The study of this work is most profitable. It possesses an admirable and efficacious virtue to persuade. All that can be said in its favor is below the truth. As soon as we begin to read it, we are rapt in admiration. I feel, with lively regret, that I have need of the wisdom of an angel to express my meaning, my veneration, my desires, on this subject." Father John of the Mother of God, says, "I have been so happy as to get possession of this book, which has filled me with delight. All induces me to think that the spirit of the author has been illuminated by light from on high. The perusal of it will bring great consolation to the faithful."

The most celebrated and renowned universities have rivalled each other in exalting this admirable production. We omit the testimonials of Madrid, Alcalá, Salamanca, and Toulouse, whose eulogiums leave nothing to be desired, and cite only the University of Louvain, as follows: "Learned men or ignorant may gather admirable fruits from reading this work, which the faithful may do without fear of danger to faith or morals. We find nothing in it that tends either to the relaxation of virtue, or to an indiscreet rigor. In reading it, we are sensible of a special grace that is not felt with other books, and the more we read, the greater is the relish and the pleasure it imparts."

The Bishop of the Diocese of Sister Mary of Jesus thus announces his approbation: "I conclude that this work is really good, that it contains a heavenly doctrine, of which it is impossible to entertain the slightest doubt. We find in it a doctrine solid, strong, true, conformable to the Gospel, which leads to the knowledge of God and of the most pure Virgin, Mother of God, and excites to the love of virtue, and to a horror of sin."

The Bishop of the Diocese in which it was first printed, de-

clares, "Many theologians, the most distinguished by their authority, their learning, and their zeal for the faith, have examined every part of this work, word for word, and have approved it as being conformable to the dogmas of the Catholic faith, and useful to promote good morals."

What more can be said in praise of a book? We here aver that all our citations have been faithfully copied by ourselves from the authentic printed reports which we have translated with all possible fidelity.

But in order to leave nothing obscure, we will not omit to repeat here, that the Faculty of Paris censured several pages of the first part after its translation into French, in 1696. Now, Benedict XIV. informs us in the decree of 1748, rendered in the cause of the beatification and canonization of the servant of God, that Amort, the most formidable adversary of Mary d'Agreda, acknowledged the censure of the Faculty of Paris to be without foundation and of no value. Hence, we need not pause to prove that this censure is marked as null, for numerous reasons that were explained by the postulator before the Holy Congregation of Rites. We hope there will be no further question for the future.

Spain, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, held within her bosom saints whose holiness and good works must continue forever to be celebrated in the Church. The mystical life, especially, which at this epoch, was flourishing in various nations of Europe, had in that country a prodigious impulsion. Our age, so earnest in seeking for whatever preceding times have left that is most precious, will not allow the treasures, the marvellous fruits of the gift of infused science of that happy period, to remain long in oblivion. We return to our study of the incomparable glory of Catholic Spain, Mary of Jesus d'Agreda.

We are not alone in our judgment of the seraphic servant of God. At the moment of writing these pages, a religious, venerable by his virtues and his talents, formerly Provincial

of his order, Father Laurent, has completed the publication of *The Life of the Venerable Mother, Mary of Agreda*. This Life is none other than that of Father Samaniego, of which we have given an abridgment in this volume.

In a very beautiful introduction, Father Laurent writes as follows upon the great work of the venerable Mary:—

“The divine inspiration makes itself felt in every page. In reading it we are persuaded that it was only in the celestial regions, where she was rapt in her ecstasies, that she could gather the knowledge of these sublime mysteries, the revelation of the most adorable and ineffable designs of the Most High upon the august Mary.”

“It is under the dictation of the Mother of Jesus Christ that she retraces the mortal life of the Queen of Heaven; so that this work, fallen from the pen of a simple girl without acquired knowledge, and living in the obscurity of a cloister, is perhaps, *the most extraordinary, and the most astonishing book that ever issued from mortal hands*. The author approaches without hesitation the most sublime mysteries of the Christian religion, and unfolds them with rare clearness. She developes, without embarrassment, and with a prodigious facility, the Catholic dogma, and the most difficult passages of the holy writings. The sacred chronology is as familiar to her as to the most eminent doctors; she reveals the most secret ways of Providence: sacred theology, sublime philosophy, extensive knowledge of the natural sciences, persuasive eloquence, all are here united, even to the precision, the correctness, the elevation, the vigor, and elegance of the style.”—*Life of the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus d'Agreda*. Intro. pp. 16, 17.

We have dwelt designedly on the work of this servant of God. The *Cité Mystique*, in our view, is not only, according to Father Laurent, “the book, the most extraordinary and astonishing that ever issued from the hands of any living creature:” it seems to us to be manifestly destined, in the

designs of Providence, to produce great fruits for the sanctification and the higher perfection of souls in these latter times.

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We give, in conclusion, a brief resumé of the acts of the cause for the beatification and canonization of Mary of Jesus of Agreda. The reader must perceive that God has been pleased to manifest the glory and the sanctity of his servant, declared Venerable by the Church, and who will be placed on her altars, as we hope, within a few years.

She died, May 24th, 1665, on the day of Pentecost. Soon after, the process of the Bishop of her Diocese was opened on her virtues and miracles in general, and the *fama sanctitatis*. On the 21st of November, 1671, the demand was made for the process of canonization. Clement X. introduced the cause August 24th, 1672. The commission of introduction was signed, Jan. 28th, 1673. The decree on the non-culte was carried June 27th, 1674. The apostolic process on the sanctity, the virtues, and miracles in general, was presented Sept. 2d, 1679. The process was opened, the servant of God was declared Venerable, and finally, Dec. 16th, 1689, the council were named by Innocent XI. for the examination of the books.

After a long course of disappointments, the case was resumed in 1745, under Benedict XIV. who, in 1748, rendered a decree, that he did not contest *Prout oportet*, the authenticity of the writings. At length, Clement XIV. declared that the book, the *Cité Mystique* really belonged to Mary of Jesus of Agreda. And now, other proceedings will speedily be instituted to renew this cause, and we trust, in the age of Mary, the servant of God will receive the supreme honors of beatification and canonization which will fill the measure of her glory on earth.